GRATITUDE
&
PUMPKIN PIE

BROWNEYESPARKER

Gratitude & Pumpkin Pie by Brown Eyes Parker

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Summary: "What's Thanks giving?" El asks Hopper when he comes home from works, she pronounces the word in two syllables OR the one where El sort of celebrates her first Thanksgiving and asks Mike over for pie.

Gratitude & Pumpkin Pie

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"*i've got eyes to see with, ears to hear with, arms to hug with, lips to kiss with, someone to adore, how could anybody ask for more?"*

"What's *Thanks giving*?" El asks Hopper when he comes home from works, she pronounces the word in two syllables.

"Thanksgiving," Hopper corrects, taking his hat off and going to the bookshelf. He pulls one of the Encyclopedias down and plops it down on the table. He thumbs through the pages until he gets to the definition he's looking for. "Come over here, kid!"

El leans over and reads the definition aloud, trying best to read it clearly and carefully, trying not to stumble over words and phrases she doesn't know or recognize. *"The expression of gratitude, especially to God. In North America, an annual national holiday marked by religious observances and a traditional meal including turkey. The holiday commemorates a harvest festival celebrated by the Pilgrims in 1621, and is held in the US on the fourth Thursday in November."*

Hopper ruffles her hair. "Good job, Eleven!"

"It's coming," El informs him even though she has lots of questions like what a Pilgrim is but she'll shelve it for later when she talks to Mike. She likes it best when *he* explains things to her.

Hopper frowns. "What's coming?"

"Thanksgiving," she replies. "There's going to be a parade on the television on Thursday. Today is *Monday*."

Hopper clears his throat. It hasn't even occurred to him that he actually has to celebrate holidays now. He doesn't think he can cook a whole turkey even if his life depends on it. His first instinct is to call Joyce and ask her for help but the woman can't boil water without burning it.

Maybe he'll just enlist Karen to help him out. . .

"What's gratitude?" El asks suddenly, breaking into his thoughts.

"It's another word for *thanks*. Thanksgiving means *giving thanks*, like for the things you're thankful for. " Hopper explains as he goes to the fridge and roots around for something to eat. "Which is something you should practice doing *every* day!" he adds quickly.

El pauses. "Like saying *thank you*?"

"Sort of," Hopper opens the lid on a container of spaghetti and smells it. "But instead of saying *thank you*, it's more like. . . I'm thankful for Eggos and soap operas."

"Mike," El says immediately.

"What?" Hopper asks popping the past in the microwave when he determines it won't give him food poisoning.

"I'm thankful for Mike," El answers. "Can you be thankful for people too?"

He nods and replies, "you should *especially* be thankful for the *people* in your life."

"I'm *especially* thankful for him the most!" El informs him, realizing belatedly she's probably saying it wrong.

Hopper laughs. "I am very aware of *that* fact, kiddo!"

"Do. . . do I *tell* him?"

"Well. . ."

"*Well?"* she presses.

"You could," Hopper answers.

El raises an eyebrow. *"But?"*

"Well, I don't think you're going to see him on Thanksgiving."

El crosses her arms and glares at him. "Why not?"

"He probably has family in town or he's leaving for the weekend," Hopper explains.

El falters and then goes to the phone, she doesn't take her eyes off of Hopper as she dials Mike's number. A few seconds she lights up. "Hi Mike! It's El! I miss you too." she nods and then remembers to say, "yeah," because he can't see her.

Hopper huffs and El turns her back to him.

"Don't talk for too long," Hopper warns her.

"I was calling to see if you're doing anything on Thanksgiving," El says. "Nothing really? Oh. Dinner. . . I don't know what we're doing," she glances at Hopper and holds the phone out for him. "Mike wants to talk to you."

Hopper chokes on his pasta. *"Me?"*

El nods and shakes the receiver at him. Hopper puts his dinner down and takes the impatiently.

"Be nice!" she hisses.

Hopper smirks. "Yeah, what do you want?"

El can hear Mike's excited chatter on the other end and she feels excitement bloom in her chest even though she's not sure what he's talking about. Hopper's eyes narrow more and more over the course of the conversation.

And then he sighs deeply. "Okay fine! But only for an hour or two! Not all the puppy dog eyes in the world can get me to change my mind!" he covers the mouthpiece with his hand and looks at El. "You can say goodnight but you only get two more minutes!"

El nods and presses the phone to her ear. "Mike? It's El again! Hopper says I have to say goodnight. Really?" she sequels. "Okay! I'll see you then! Sweet dreams, Mike! 'Night!"

"Only one hour or two!" Hopper repeats when she hangs up. "That's all!"

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On Wednesday morning, El pours over *The Joy of Cooking* while Hopper makes coffee.

"What kind of dessert do you have on Thanksgiving?" she asks.

"Pumpkin pie," Hopper answers.

"Can you get me the stuff to make it with?" El requests.

"Erm. Maybe you should just let me buy one at the bakery in the grocery store," Hopper says. "Instead of making a mess in the kitchen —"

"Please?" El begs. "I really want to make one for Mike."

Hopper rolls his eyes but finds himself agreeing to go and buy everything she needs so she can do it.

She's absolutely beaming when he leaves.

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The next day, El gets up early even though Mike won't be over until six that night. When Hopper comes out of his room, the TV is turned to the parade and there's flour everywhere including on her while she struggles to open the pumpkin puree with a can opener.

Hopper rubs his temples. "Eleven, I bought pre-made pie crust. What are you doing?"

El drops the can on the floor and lets out an explicit.

Hopper's eye twitches.

"Sorry," El says as she bends down and picks it up.

Hopper takes it from her impatiently and opens it in four easy twists. "I need coffee! It's way too early for this.

El shrugs and starts to spoon the pumpkin into a bowl. "Don't watch me!" she says when she looks up from the recipe. "I won't be able to

concentrate!"

Hopper sits down on the couch. "You better clean up your mess," he warns her.

"I will!" El assures him.

A few hours later, she's pulling the saddest looking pie out of the oven. The crust is just slightly overdone and the filling looks like it's sinking in.

"Mike will love it," Hopper assures her as she stares at it dejectedly.

El sighs. "You think so?"

"*Trust* me! He will! Now go and get cleaned up. I think there's more flour on you than there is in the crust."

El drags herself off to the bathroom and takes her time showering because the flour turned to clumps in her hair that she can't get out. When she's done, she has trouble deciding what to wear but finally settles on her favorite sweatshirt and Levis. She pulls socks on and then starts to comb her curls.

"What time is it?" she calls.

"Still not six!" Hopper calls back.

El comes out and stands in front of the football game. "How long?"

"There's still a while left," Hopper answers, trying to see around her.

"Well, are we going to eat while we wait?"

"Eat?"

"Thanksgiving dinner," El clarifies.

"Oh. . . um. . . well, here's the thing. . ." Hopper trails off. "I wasn't exactly planning on having Thanksgiving dinner this year. I didn't have enough time to buy all your ingredients for the pie and. . . *next year*, okay? I promise."

El lifts an eyebrow. "You *promise*?"

Hopper nods and she moves away, halfway happy.

At five-fifty-five, El has him shut off the game even though his team is winning and she puts some music on instead. Looks in the mirror and fidgets with her curls. At five-fifty-nine, there's a knock on the door.

"I'll get it!" she shouts, darting past Hopper and flinging it open.

Mike smiles widely when he sees her and takes his hands out of his pockets. "Hi, Eleven!"

"Mike!" She replies, beaming at him.

After a few seconds, they ease into a hug and stand in the threshold, locked in an embrace as they sway back and forth together. Lost in their own world.

Hopper clears his throat to get their attention. "Don't just stand there! Invite him in!"

"Come on in!" El says, releasing him and stepping aside to let him in.

"Hey Chief," Mike says, shaking his hand. "I hope you've had a nice day."

"It's been okay," Hopper replies. "How about you? Did you eat a lot?"

"I ate a fair amount," Mike answers but El has his full attention.

Hopper clears his throat. "Aren't you forgetting something, Eleven?"

El tears her gaze away from Mike. "What?"

"*Dessert!"*

"Oh! Would you like some pie?" El asks. "I made it this morning!"

"Sure!"

El brings the pie to the table and three plates, she cuts generous,

uneven portions for all three of them and passes them around.

"I'm going to smoke a cigarette," Hopper tells them, letting them both believe he's giving them some privacy but he'll sit close enough to the door and be able to hear their conversation over "Too Late To Turn Back Now".

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El watches Mike anxiously as he wolfs down the pie.

He catches her eye. "What? What is it?" he asks. "Do I have something on my face?"

"What are you thankful for?" she blurts out without any of the subtlety of her favorite leading ladies on television, she could feel the pink spreading throughout her whole entire body.

Mike's fork is halfway to his mouth as he stops and looks at her. *"What!?"* he asks again.

"It's Thanksgiving. You should express gratitude today—"

Mike pauses and then starts to rattle off a list of things like it's not the first time he's doing it that day. El is practically falling out of her skin to tell him what *she's* thankful for. She's so anxious about it that she's bouncing out of her chair with the sheer desperation to tell him. She's barely paying attention to what he's saying until he gets to the end

". . .and most importantly, I'm thankful for *you*! I am thankful for *you* most of all!" Mike finishes.

El feels like she's glowing as she finds his hand. "Me too!" she tells him. "I mean, I'm thankful for you the most too!"

She likes the way Mike's eyes crinkle when he smiles at her, he looks just as thrilled as she feels.

The End

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Author's Note:

Yeah. I have no clue what this is. . . I wrote it in paragraphs at night and hoped it would all make sense and be cohesive in the end. A good portion of this story is brought to you in part by "I've Got Plenty To Be Thankful For" from Holiday Inn and sung by Bing Crosby. If you think this is the only holiday themed story you're going to get from me. . . think again. I ADORE THE HOLIDAYS! So, settle in for mostly holiday themed one-shots from now until February.

A few more notes, the pie thing came from one of ValBrich's and I know, I know a lot of people think they didn't see each other until the Snowball. BUT WHERE'S THE FUN IN THAT!?

Until Next Time!

Lots of Love,

Holly, 11/16/2017

P.S

I've got plenty to be thankful for myself and YOU, my wonderful readers are in the top 5 of my list.